

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 CIAE-00
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1357
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UNCLAS QUEBEC 0184

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT; PGOV, CA
SUBJECT: BEDARD NAMED TO MANAGE PQ'S REFERENDUM LEGISLATION

REF: QUEBEC 0176

1. THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT JUSTICE MINISTER MARC ANDRE BEDARD WILL PILOT THE PQ'S REFERENDUM LEGISLATION, RELIEVING MINISTER FOR PARLIAMENTARY REFORM ROBERT BURNS, WHO IS AILING (REFTEL). THE GOVERNMENT SAYS IT IS DETERMINED TO GET THE REFERENDUM BILL ACTED UPON DURING THE CURRENT SESSION (A FORMIDABLE TASK GIVEN THAT THERE ARE ONLY ELEVEN WORK DAYS LEFT UNTIL THE SCHEDULED SUMMER BREAK JUNE 21), AND COMMITTEE SESSIONS SUSPENDED BECAUSE OF BURNS' ABSENCE, WILL RESUME THIS WEEK.

2. COMMENT: BEDARD'S NAME WAS ONE OF SEVERAL BEING BRUITED ABOUT RECENTLY FOR THE REFERENDUM JOB. OTHER LEADING CONTENDERS REPORTEDLY WERE CAMILLE LAURIN, WHO ENJOYED THE ADVANTAGES OF PARLIAMENTARY EXPERIENCE AND THE LACK OF A WORKING MINISTRY TO SUPERVISE, AND CALUDE CHARRON. LAURIN WAS APPARENTLY DEEMED TOO CONTROVERSIAL FOR THE DELICATE REFERENDUM ISSUE; CHARRON, WHO ACCORDING TO SOME UNCLASSIFIED

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REPORTS WAS LEVESQUE'S PERSONAL CHOICE, HAS TAKEN OVER AS PARLIAMENTARY LEADER IN ADDITION TO HIS REGULAR DUTIES AS MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS, AND WAS SIMPLY UNABLE TO SHOULDER THE ADDITIONAL LOAD OF THE REFERENDUM LEGISLATION. THE GOQ HAS INTRODUCED A FLOOD OF NEW LEGISLATION IN THE WANING DAYS OF THE CURRENT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION, AND CHARRON UNDOUBTEDLY HAS HIS HANDS FULL. BEDARD ALSO WILL HAVE

PLENTY TO DO: THE LIBERALS ARE IN FULL CRY AGAINST THE
REFERENDUM LAW AS TABLED AND WILL OFFER A HOST OF AMENDMENTS
IN COMMITTEE, AND BEDARD LACKS BURNS' PARLIAMENTARY SAVVY
IN HANDLING THE EXPECTED ONSLAUGHT. IN ADDITION, THE
REFERENDUM LAW IS SPECIAL BABY AND THE AILING MINISTER WILL
IN ALL LIKELIHOOD BE KEEPING A WATCHFUL EYE ON HIS
REPLACEMENT, EVEN FROM HIS SICKBED. BOSWELL

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